

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE  
WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION  
November 14 & 15, 2006**

The regular meeting of the Washington State Transportation Commission was called to order at 9 A.M., on November 14, 2006, in Room 1D2 of the Transportation Building in Olympia, Washington.

Commissioners present at the meeting were: Chair Ford, Ed Barnes, Bob Distler, Elmira Forner, Carol Moser, Dan O'Neal and Dale Stedman.

**MINUTES APPROVAL**

*It was moved by Commissioner Stedman and seconded by Commissioner Distler to approve minutes of the September 27, 2006 and October 17 & 18, 2006 Commission meeting. The motion passed unanimously.*

**PUGET SOUND REGIONAL COUNCIL TRAFFIC CHOICES STUDY-REPORT ON PRELIMINARY FINDINGS**

Aubrey Davis and Matthew Kitchen presented Puget Sound Regional Council's "Puget Sound Traffic Choices Study". Mr. Davis shared a brief history of the study. He explained that public expenditures are a small, but critical, portion of the full costs of sustaining our transportation systems. Essentially the road finance system is financially weak with the poor elasticity of the gas tax, especially with new fuels. Congestion is increasing and as the system ages road conditions continue to deteriorate, hence public support of general tax increases is ambiguous at best. Conventional road financing is a vicious circle that demand pricing can break. Mr. Kitchen shared that preliminary results from the study indicate that study participants changed their driving behavior over the course of the study in response to congestion pricing tolls. Behavior changes were largely cost driven as well as a savings in time. The study demonstrates general feasibility of GPS-based solution for tolling applications in the United States. A large scale deployment of a GPS-based tolling solution depends on a viable business model and public acceptance of the underlying concept.

**LONG-TERM AIR TRANSPORTATION STUDY REPORT**

John Siebold, Director, Aviation Division, WSDOT, provided an overview of the Long-Term Air Transportation Study (LATS) Phase I. Phase I of LATS presents a snapshot of our state's existing 140 public use airports, a measurement of current capacity and provides highlights of key findings that illustrate strengths and weaknesses of the state's current aviation system. Phase II of LATS is currently underway and includes long-range activity forecasts, an air cargo assessment, commercial service market analysis and a high-speed passenger rail evaluation. Phase III will include a ten-member planning council, appointed by the Governor, that will make future recommendations on statewide aviation needs.

## **ADOPTION OF WTP**

*It was moved by Commissioner Stedman and seconded by Commissioner O'Neal to approve Resolution 682 adopting the, 2007-26 Washington Transportation Plan. Commissioner Stedman extended his appreciation to the Department staff for their support in making this plan possible.*

Brian Smith, Director, Strategic Planning & Programming, WSDOT, acknowledged and thanked the Commission for its continued engagement in development of the plan. He recognized the monumental efforts of Secretary MacDonald, Chief of Staff Paula Hammond, Elizabeth Robbins and Judy Lorenzo and their staff. He also thanked the RTPOs' for their partnership in developing a statewide plan.

Robin Rettew, Office of Financial Management, thanked the Commission, the Department and outside entities for bringing forth this transportation plan.

Paul Parker, Senior Policy Analyst, WSTC, noted that the Commission's *draft* annual report reflects directly on the WTP.

Chair Ford expressed his gratitude to Commissioner's Stedman, O'Neal, Distler and Moser for their participation in the WTP Team that enabled this plan to move forward.

*The motion to approve Resolution 682 adopting the 2007-26 WTP passed unanimously.*

## **SECRETARY'S REPORT**

Paula Hammond, Chief of Staff, WSDOT, discussed various transportation related subjects.

Colleen Jolly, Tribal Liaison, WSDOT, shared information regarding the Department's annual Tribal Conference, held in Stevenson Washington this year. She noted that there was above average participation in the conference.

## **SOUND TRANSIT 2007 PACKAGE OVERVIEW**

Ric Ilgenfritz, Chief of Communications, Sound Transit, provided an overview of Sound Transit's plan for the future. The plan includes several proposed enhancements to services for 2007. Sound Transit and the Regional Transportation Investment District are working on a plan of improvements that will get people moving. These investments will build on the projects already under construction and will make a real difference to those living and working in the Puget Sound region. The plan integrates transit and road improvements to reduce traffic backups and travel time, improve safety and keep people and freight moving in the most congested corridors. The roads and transit plan will be before the region's voters in the fall of 2007.

## **COMMISSION STAFF REPORT**

Reema Griffith, Executive Director, presented the *draft* Memorandum of Understanding (MOA) between the Commission and the Department of Transportation for review.

This MOA describes the entities understanding regarding the Commission's use of the Department's headquarters building, the provision of administrative and staff support by the Department and the Commission's obligation to reimburse the Department for the cost of those services.

Paul Parker, Senior Policy Analyst, presented the proposed 2007 Commission meeting schedule, and a *draft* 2006 Annual Report for review and comment. The Commission approved the 2007 meeting schedule with suggested changes.

Ms. Griffith informed the Commission that the Joint Transportation Committee has retained Lund Consulting to perform an assessment of the performance based benchmarks in statute resulting from the Blue Ribbon Commission. To aide in this assessment a task force comprised of the Commission, WSDOT, Office of Financial Management and Legislative staff will work together reviewing the benchmarks. She explained that the Commission's involvement will be minimal, as it will independently assess whether or not attainment was achieved.

### **PUBLIC AND LEGISLATOR COMMENT PERIOD**

There were no public or Legislators present for comment.

### **COMMISSIONER REPORTS**

Commissioner O'Neal reported that he has attended two Tacoma Narrows Bridge Citizen Advisory meetings.

### **GRAY NOTEBOOK UPDATE**

Daniela Bremmer, Director, Strategic Assessment, Strategic Planning and Programming, present the *draft* Gray Notebook for the quarter ending September 30, 2006.

Rico Baroga, Maintenance Policy Branch Manager, provided the annual update on highway maintenance. He shared information on the Highway litter removal, the roadkill-composting system and highway bridge maintenance updates.

DeWayne Wilson, Bridge Management Engineer, provided an annual update on bridge asset management.

Anna Yamada, Performance Measurement and Analysis Manager, Maintenance and Operations-Traffic Operations Office, provided an overview of measuring delay and congestion analysis.

For further information please visit the Gray Notebook at:  
<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/accountability/GrayNotebook.pdf>

## **PUBLIC AWARENESS AND ACCEPTANCE OF VALUE PRICING**

David Forte, Systems Planning Manager, Urban Planning Office, WSDOT, explained that WSDOT and Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) will collaboratively conduct a research and analysis project on the acceptance and awareness of pricing in Puget Sound. He noted that the Commission's Tolling Study found that the public did not have a great awareness, or a great acceptance of tolling or specifically pricing. WSDOT and PSRC have developed a program where some of the concepts can be tested. This will be a very effective way of advancing short and mid-term projects and policy development in tolling and pricing. It is expected that by involving the public priorities and issues could be identified. He briefly touched on the Federal Highway Administration's Value Pricing Pilot Program.

## **PUBLIC HEARING ON RULES FOR WSDOT'S TRANSPORTATION INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAM**

Chair Ford opened the public hearing to consider adoption of the administrative rules for the Transportation Innovative Partnership Program. He explained that individuals wishing to provide comment would need to sign in and would speak at the end of the presentation.

Jeff Doyle, Director, Transportation Innovative Partnerships, WSDOT, provided background information on the program. He explained that per the Commission's direction the rules are closely modeled after the State of Oregon Public Private Partnership rules. If public comment is provided during this hearing, the Commission must deliberate and decide whether it wishes to take the comments under advisement, which would delay final action on the rules to a later date, or discuss the comments immediately. Either way, the Commission must consider and deliberate any issues raised, even if the Commission decides to keep the rules in their present form and adopt them at the conclusion of the hearing.

Donald Williams, citizen, submitted written comments on the proposed rules and addressed the Commission with his concerns.

The Commission determined that it will review Mr. Williams' comments and make recommendation at the December meeting.

## **TRANSPORTATION INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIPS (TIPP) PROGRAM UPDATE**

Jeff Doyle, Director, Transportation Innovative Partnerships, shared information on the program's next steps. He explained that TIPP is the formal process through which the state considers and approves public/private projects. The Commission's role is to review and approve projects/proposals once they have gone through the process. He explained that it will take up to three months to put together a first cut registry of proposed projects.

## **COLUMBIA RIVER CROSSING PROJECT UPDATE**

Doug Fico, Director, Columbia River Crossing Project, WSDOT, provided an update on the status of the project. He explained the purpose, needs and recommendations from previous studies. For further information on the project please visit the project website at:

<http://www.columbiarivercrossing.org/>

## **UPDATE ON STATE AUDITOR'S OFFICE TRANSPORTATION AUDIT WORK**

Chris Cortines and Emmaline Hoffmeister, State Auditor's Office, provided an update on the progress of the WSDOT performance audits. Ms. Hoffmeister explained that the audits focus on consumable inventory and supply management, procurement strategy of hot mix asphalt, highway maintenance operations and project delivery and construction management as directed by the legislature in 2006. There are 14 objectives that include evaluating the Department's financial and operational efficiency; identifying areas that need to be consolidated and areas that need to be augmented; identifying best practices for the agency; and recognizing those that are in place. The audit will consider if it would increase the Department's efficiency to make interagency agreements with local governments, make changes to organizational structure, or use contractors for some of the work.

Through a public outreach survey it was found that transportation received the second lowest satisfaction rating of all government performance. The survey indicated that transportation should be audited first; those who ranked kindergarten through grade-12 education as their first priority ranked transportation and health care as their next choices. Those who ranked transportation first said their biggest concerns are accountability over public funds; congestion; mass transit; and efficiency of operations.

The performance audit is being performed by a contractor under the direction of the State Auditor's Office. The final report will be sent to the Governor, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee, the Office of Financial Management, Legislative Committees and other interested parties.

Ms. Hoffmeister provided an overview of the Washington State Ferry System audit explaining that it will explore ways to lower operating costs, capital maintenance cost and capital acquisition costs, which may offset financial difficulties caused by fuel prices or the need to increase fees. The audit is currently in Phase II with observations, initial staff interviews and preliminary planning completed. The scope and objective has not be fully identified at this time, but is expected to be completed within a week. Once this has been completed field work will begin.

Commissioner Distler pointed out that there is currently a legislatively mandated Ferry Finance Study underway and questioned why this audit is occurring at this time. He explained that the study is not an audit, but is looking at significant ways of potentially changing the way the agency does business. He expressed that he has significant concerns that the audit is occurring during the study.

Ms. Hoffmeister explained that they are aware of the study. The contractors are following the study as it progresses and are making certain that there is not an overlap or duplication of efforts taking place.

Commissioner Distler also noted that the loss of the Motor Vehicle Excise Tax revenue is a significant contributor to the financial dilemma of the ferry system.

Ms. Hoffmeister noted that the issue has been identified by the auditors.

Commissioner Distler suggested that perhaps the audit schedule could be shifted to accommodate the completion of the Ferry Finance Study. He also expressed that the audit should take into account the implementation of the new Electronic Fare System (EFS). Ms. Hoffmeister responded that the EFS is not part of this audit.

Commissioner Distler questioned the audit's ability to delve into all the elements and come up with a satisfactory assumption.

In closing Mr. Cortines commented on congestion and potential improvements, as well as the cost for those improvements. He explained that letters of interest that have been submitted for the congestion audit, noting that the approach taken would be; that within the funding constraints, would or could WSDOT approach this in a different way.

Commissioner Distler expressed that he has concerns with the scope of the congestion audit.

The Commission meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m., on November 15, 2006.

#### WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

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DICK FORD, Chair

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ELMIRA FORNER, Vice-Chair

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EDWARD BARNES, Member

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CAROL MOSER, Member

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DAN O'NEAL, Member

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ROBERT S. DISTLER, Member

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DALE STEDMAN, Member

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DOUGLAS MACDONALD, Ex-Officio Member  
Secretary of Transportation

ATTEST:

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REEMA GRIFFITH, Executive Director

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DATE OF APPROVAL